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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SE WILLIAMSON, DG THOMAS, AF/PDAS THOMAS-GREENFIELD,
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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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SUBJECT: MFA WARNS CDA OF POSSIBLE HARSH COUNTERMEASURES ON EMBASSY
DUE TO AMERICAN PROVOCATIONS

REF: A) KHARTOUM 42
B) KHARTOUM 74

¶1. (SBU) A grim-faced Americas Department Office Director Abdel Basit Sanusi called CDA Fernandez in on January 26 to warn of the possibility of a series of Sudanese counter-measures against the US Embassy (and the CDA) in response to what the Sudanese see as a series of recent provocations by the U.S.

¶2. (SBU) Sanusi began by noting that CDA had often spoken of American frustration with Sudan. "Well now the frustration by the Sudanese Government with the U.S. is growing and nearing the breaking point," he said. In the Foreign Ministry, this included not only the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ali Karti and the influential Under-Secretary Mutriff Siddiq, but was widely held throughout the government "even by some who were defending engagement with the US before." He cited US criticism of the Musa Hilal appointment, President Bush's signing of the Sudan Divestment Act on January 1, US leadership in condemning Sudan at the UNSC for a mistaken attack on a UNAMID convoy, and continued harassment of Sudanese diplomatic missions in New York and Washington as the main, most immediate reasons for the rapid increase in the frustration level.

¶3. (SBU) He added that Sudan was considering a series of steps that included (but was not limited to) the following, although he cautioned that no decision had yet been made: imposing an accountant to monitor US Embassy bank accounts in Sudan and charging a special surcharge for those accounts (in response to the \$3,000 a month surcharge the Sudanese Embassy in Washington has to pay), instituting fingerprint procedures for all Americans wishing a visa to Sudan, forcing Americans to get their Sudanese visa in person in some third country, severely reducing US Embassy access to senior GOS officials (he cited the procedures used by the Syrians with the US Embassy in Damascus), expelling the Charge, and closing their Embassy in Washington and our Embassy here.

¶4. (SBU) He said that "on top of everything else" the Sudanese Mission to the UN had been informed by their American insurance company that their insurance premiums (including on the Ambassador's car) have been cancelled because of sanctions.

¶5. (SBU) Sanusi also complained about the Charge's January 24 interview with Reuters (widely reprinted by the Sudanese Arabic language press on January 25). He said CDA's comments on U.S. frustration with lack of implementation by Sudan of international and national agreements (like UNAMID) and on the Abyei issue "constituted interference in the internal affairs of Sudan." MFA subsequently issued these complaints publicly on January 26.

¶6. (SBU) Sanusi also echoed other officials by sharply criticizing the new US Special Envoy to Sudan, Richard Williamson. First of all, he said "we think that this process of American special envoys has run its course and we are opposed to it in principle" and then "we reject the extreme positions he has taken in writing on Sudan". CDA noted that in the case of the new Special Envoy, Sudan should have an open mind and the important things are policies not people and the USG as a whole has very real concerns in Sudan.

¶7. (SBU) Charge responded that he will report this information to Washington. On his own interview, he noted that UNAMID deployment and Abyei are issues of deep concern to the U.S. and these concerns were American policy. He noted that the complaint about mentioning Abyei was very odd since the SPLM - part of the Sudanese Government - had repeatedly asked for greater American attention on Abyei (since the US was the author of the Abyei Protocol) and indeed one of the officials who had asked the CDA to do so was Deng Alor, formerly Minister of Cabinet Affairs and now Foreign Minister. He also noted that this long series of complaints and proposed countermeasures squared strangely with the Foreign Minister's professed interest in improved relations with the U.S. (reftel a).

¶8. (SBU) CDA also noted to Sanusi that all the statements that supposedly bother the Sudanese (slowness of UNAMID deployment, need to implement Abyei, and general distrust of Khartoum's "lack of good faith") are not only U.S. policy, but Charge has made those statements many times in Sudan, in Arabic and in English, even in the regime-controlled media. Sanusi admitted that but added that when an overall relationship with a country deteriorates, even things that were acceptable before are examined in a harsher light.

¶9. (SBU) In addition to reftel b, Several Sudanese businessmen with regime ties have recently warned the Embassy that the Sudanese

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leadership now feels that the Bush Administration is all but done and is unable to either help or hurt Sudan more than they are already doing, so there is little to fear from the U.S. or to expect from it in the form of concessions. For some the Divestment Bill was a perfect example of something that the Administration opposed (at least in rhetoric) but happened anyway. One noted that regime leaders are saying that "even if the Democrats get in next year, their bark is worse than their bite" and Sudan can weather the storm because of American military, political and economic overstretch worldwide. The calculation is that Sudan has enough international allies and has now done just enough in complying on Darfur, on CPA, and on its internal political situation to solidify its position internationally and regionally.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: The Sudanese regime often makes threats it doesn't follow through on (or at least, not on all of them) and some of these measures, such as downgrading relations and making visas harder to get, have been discussed before in the past few years. What is more surprising is how this proposed harder line by the Khartoum regime squares with recent public statements - by both the new Foreign Minister and Presidential Advisor Ismail - that they want improved relations with the U.S. It is, however, standard operating procedure for the Khartoum regime to "create a crisis" and then use negotiation on the crisis they themselves created to extract concessions.

FERNANDEZ